

PLANNING COMMITTEE

18 December 2013



Report of: Assistant Director (Regeneration)

Subject: PLANNING UPDATE AUTUMN STATEMENT

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update Members to the recent Government Autumn Statement.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Treasury announced a swathe of announcements covering job creation, taxes, growth, infrastructure, business rates, fuel duty, local government, and housing in the Governments Autumn Statement on the 5th December 2013. This was in addition to the National Infrastructure Plan which was announced on the 4th December 2013, both of which contain pro-growth measures; Ministers regard them as attempts to make the current planning system faster and more efficient in certain areas.

2.2 The Autumn Statement demonstrated again that the Treasury believes more planning reforms are needed to help UK climb out of recession and in terms of planning the following headings are relevant.

2.3 New Homes Bonus

- The government will consult on measures to improve further the incentive of the New Homes Bonus, in particular withholding payments where local authorities have objected to development, and planning approvals are granted on appeal.

2.4 Local Plans

- The government will consult on measures to improve plan making, including a statutory requirement to put a Local Plan in place.

2.5 Statutory consultees

- The government will consult on proposals to reduce the number of applications where unnecessary statutory consultations occur and pilot a single point of contact for cases where conflicting advice is provided by key statutory consultees.

2.6 Planning obligations and conditions

- The Autumn Statement revealed that the government will consult on a new 10 unit threshold for section 106 affordable housing contributions "to reduce costs for small builders".

2.7 Planning conditions

- The government will legislate to treat planning conditions as approved where a planning authority has failed to discharge a planning condition on time. The government will consult on legislative measures to strengthen the requirement for planning authorities to justify any conditions that must be discharged before building can start.

2.8 Permitted development

- The government "will consult on liberalising change of use from retail to restaurant or assembly and leisure uses, and liberalising planning restrictions on mezzanine floors in retail premises, where this will support town centres".

2.9 Planning performance

- The Autumn Statement document revealed that the government will consult on increasing the threshold for designation under its controversial "special measures" policy from 30 per cent to 40 per cent of decisions made on time. Under the policy, developers can choose to submit major applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate where a council has been designated.

2.10 Regeneration and economic development

- The government will "explore options for kick starting the regeneration of some of the worst housing estates through repayable loans", the Autumn Statement document said."

- The chancellor also announced that the government will create a £1 billion, six-year programme to fund infrastructure to unlock new large housing sites.

2.11 Shale gas

- The government will introduce a new tax relief for shale gas. "The country that was the first to extract oil and gas from deep under the sea should not turn its back on new sources of energy like shale gas because it's all too difficult," The Autumn Statement said.

2.12 Development Benefits

- The government wants to ensure that households benefit from development in their local area. Building on the measures we have already put in place at the local authority and community level (including the neighbourhood funding element of the Community Infrastructure Levy and the New Homes Bonus), the government will work with industry, local authorities and other interested parties to develop a pilot for passing a share of the benefits of development directly to individual households.

3. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 There are no equality or diversity implications.

4. SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 There are no Section 17 Implications

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Should the authority fall into ‘special measures’ HBC would not receive any fees associated with planning application submissions made directly to the Secretary of State. These are likely to be the higher planning fees associated with major planning applications.

5.2 It should also be noted that the potential for New Homes Bonus to be withheld should decisions on planning applications be overturned on appeal is a cause for concern. It was highlighted to Members at the Planning Committee in July this year that the Council’s appeal record is poor and in 2012-2013 it should be noted that Hartlepool had 71% of appeals allowed.

6. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 There is a statutory duty ‘to prepare and maintain’ a Local Plan in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The proposal contained within the Autumn Statement to impose a statutory duty to put a Local Plan in place could have implications for Hartlepool in their plan preparation. However as there are no details at this stage this impact is presently unknown although, it is suggested that the Government will engage in consultation during 2014.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That Members note the report and the potential implications for planning in Hartlepool.

8 CONTACT OFFICER

- 8.1 Damien Wilson
Assistant Director (Regeneration)
Level 3
Civic Centre
Hartlepool
TS24 8AY

Tel: (01429) 523400
E-mail: damien.wilson@hartlepool.gov.uk

- 8.2 AUTHOR: Chris Pipe
Planning Services Manager
Bryan Hanson House
Hartlepool
TS24 7BT

Tel: (01429) 523596
E-mail: christine.pipe@hartlepool.gov.uk